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EXCELLENT
SERVICE
AWARD
2014

20th
Anniversary

Our Service
Excellence
Journey





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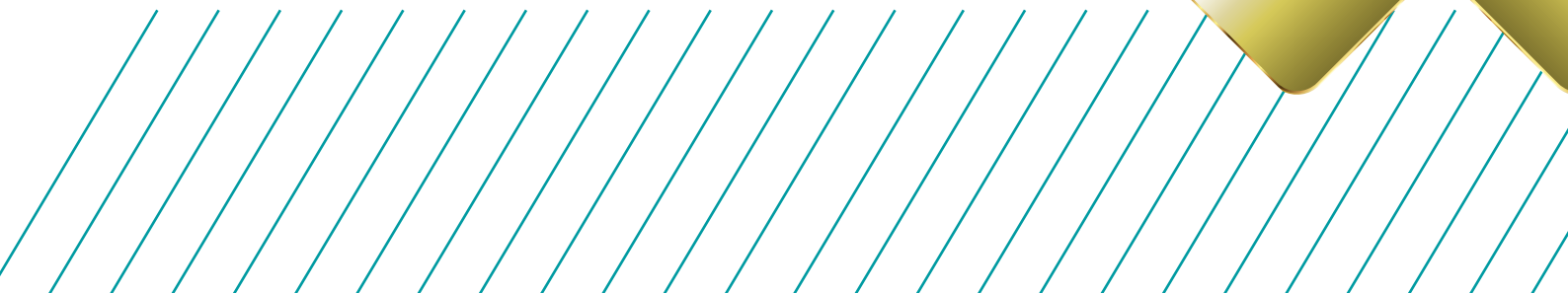
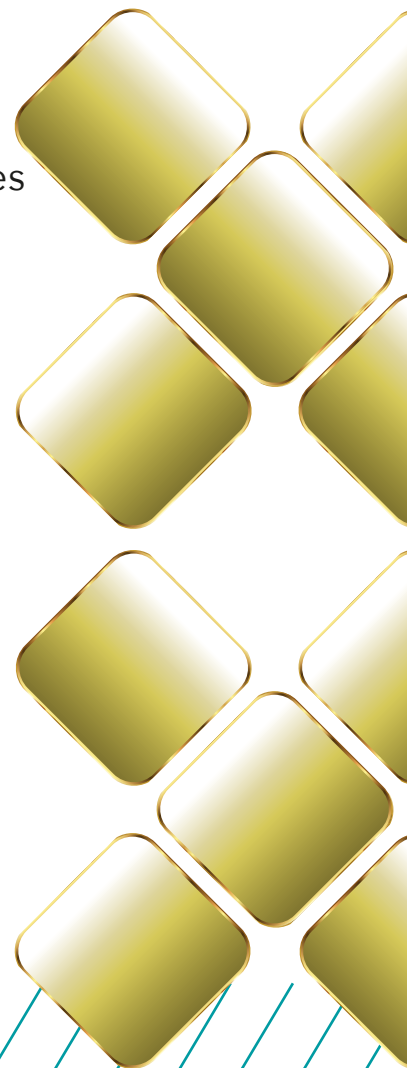
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FUTURE

Fit for the future
20 years and beyond





Message from SPRING Singapore
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FORWARD

❖ Message from SPRING Singapore



What drives service excellence? As we reach the 20th Excellent Service Award (EXSA) milestone, I am heartened to see that participation in the awards has grown steadily, allowing us to uncover many service champions and role models over the years.

The service landscape in Singapore is constantly evolving, with companies facing greater manpower constraints, higher business costs and rising customer expectations. Hence, it is important for us to continually re-define service excellence and instill a mindset change among all stakeholders – companies, staff and customers.

Increasingly, customers want to take charge of their own experience. In response, many companies now offer customers the chance to co-create their desired service experience, adopt innovative service practices, redesign their workflow and processes, and leverage technology to stay ahead of consumer needs and trends.

Attracting and retaining the right mix of talents who are willing to go the extra mile will remain a challenge. Hence, it is important to recognise and reward staff who made a difference, provide them with career progression pathways and empower them with knowledge and service skills to deliver excellent service. Customers have a role to play too, by complimenting exemplary service and providing constructive feedback so that staff can deliver a more positive experience.

Moving forward, SPRING will continue to collaborate with the various EXSA industry lead bodies to enhance the service delivery of their members. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the companies and individuals who have been part of the EXSA journey. Collectively, we can all contribute towards developing a Singapore inspired model of service.

Ms Choy Sauw Kook
*Co-Chairperson, GEMS Up Committee &
Assistant Chief Executive (Quality & Excellence)
SPRING Singapore*

❖ Message from EXSA Committee



First impressions count, especially in today's fast-paced and competitive environment. That's why it is crucial for employers to motivate service professionals to go the extra mile and create memorable experiences for their customers. By creating an incentive for excellent service delivery, the Excellent Service Award (EXSA) does just that.

This year, we are delighted to celebrate EXSA's 20th anniversary. Since its inception, the initiative has grown in stature to become a well-recognised and highly sought-after accolade for the service sector. The degree of participation from the various industry sectors and the number of winners have grown steadily over the years – a testament to how EXSA has grown to be a valued accolade for service professionals

As a development programme, EXSA not only spurs individuals to deliver first-rate customer care, it promotes ongoing training to reinforce and strengthen service skills. Through the years, the EXSA Development workshop – a programme for all award nominees – has been revised to

keep up to date with changes in service delivery to cater to evolving customers' needs.

This commemorative e-book honours those individuals who have gone beyond the call of duty to provide high standards of service in their respective sectors. I congratulate all the winners who have helped raise the prestige of a career in the service sector, and continue to be role models for the industry. Enjoy your journey through these pages as you read about the history of EXSA and the stories of winners who epitomise excellent service.

I am extremely grateful to SPRING Singapore and our industry stakeholders for their strong support. I look forward to growing the EXSA movement further and raising the level of service in Singapore to new heights.

Ms Margaret Heng
*Chairperson, EXSA Committee &
Executive Director
Singapore Hotel Association*

EXSA'S JOURNEY

Mapping EXSA's History

Perspectives from the past

Presidents' messages





❖ Mapping EXSA's history

When EXSA was first proposed by the National Productivity Board in 1994, the service industry was going through some significant changes. Customers had been used to making purchasing decisions based on cost, but at a time when society was becoming more affluent, their demands and expectations were also increasing. Customers no longer perceived the value of a product on price alone – the service attached to it became important, too.

Speaking at the launch of EXSA at the Asia-Pacific Service and Quality Conference in 1995, Mr Goh Chee Wee, Minister of State for Trade and Industry, and Communications, said, “The call for service quality has become a necessity and not a luxury for a business to survive and thrive.”

Twenty years on, the objectives of EXSA remain the same – to recognise individuals who have pulled out all the stops in delivering excellent service and providing a memorable experience to their customers. EXSA not only seeks to develop standards for staff to emulate, but it also encourages and motivates employees to become service champions, rising to the ranks of the crème de la crème of service professionals. As a result, EXSA has helped to raise the prestige of a career in the service trade and inspire loyalty to employers.

EXSA was initially created to recognise outstanding efforts by individuals in the hotel, restaurant and retail sectors. Today, the national award is supported by SPRING Singapore and managed by seven industry bodies: the Association of Singapore Attractions, Land Transport Authority, Public Service Division, Restaurant Association of Singapore, Singapore Hotel Association, Singapore Retailers Association and The Association of Banks in Singapore.

Since 1980, the US-based consultancy Business Environment Risk Intelligence has rated the Singapore workforce as the world's best. While the industry continues to evolve, what hasn't changed is EXSA's unwavering commitment to creating service excellence champions and maintaining Singapore's strong reputation for great customer service.

¹ Monetary Authority of Singapore website, 7 August 2014, <http://www.mas.gov.sg/Singapore-Financial-Centre/Value-Propositions/Skilled-Workforce.aspx#fsplink>.

❖ Awards Criteria

EXSA is a mass award that has recognised large numbers of individuals over the past 20 years. Organisations are responsible for nominating individuals, and winners are chosen based on the number of compliments and other service-related awards they have received, as well as their contribution to implementing changes that drive customer service improvements within their workplace. EXSA relies on feedback, which is why it's important for customers to recognise the critical role they play in encouraging excellent service through appreciative gestures and comments.

EXSA began with three individual award categories – Silver, Gold and Star, in order of prestige. The epitome of EXSA is the Superstar Award which is selected from the pool of Star winners.

	Silver Award	Gold Award	Star Award
Customer Compliments	Received at least two compliments during the qualifying period	Received at least three compliments during the qualifying period	Received at least five compliments during the qualifying period
Recognition through internal and external service-related awards		Received at least one service-related award during the qualifying period	Received at least two service-related awards in the last three years
Contribution to service improvement			Made suggestions that contributed to improvements in service during the qualifying period

❖ Dedication to training and development

EXSA is also a development programme. Since the awards were first launched, nominees have been participating in developmental workshops to improve their service skills. In the first year of the awards, nominees chalked up more than 60,000 training hours between them. Today, all nominees who are shortlisted attend a half-day training session that reinforces and sustains a consistent level of service. Nominees must attend the workshop to qualify for the awards.

“Workers must be given encouragement so that their commitment to excellence will not waver.”



- Mr Pakir Singh, Chairperson,
EXSA Committee 1995

❖ Perspective from the Past

We asked some of the pioneers of EXSA to share their thoughts on the 20th anniversary of the awards programme. Here's what they had to say:

In 1995, Mr Koh Juan Kiat was Executive Director of the National Productivity Board, which later became part of SPRING Singapore, and a member of the pioneer group that created EXSA. Today he is Executive Director of the Singapore National Employers Federation.

❖ *Why was it necessary to create an initiative such as EXSA in the first place?*

In the early 1990s we recognised that to increase productivity across Singapore businesses, we needed to instil a culture of customer service excellence within all industries. To support this thrust, we decided to pay recognition to those employees who were going above and beyond to exceed customer expectations.

Up until this time, productivity awards were only given to about 20 individuals a year. We felt that for customer service to thrive, we had to create a critical mass of excellent service professionals. Hence EXSA was created and hundreds of employees were awarded every year to create a movement for service excellence.

What was the vision for EXSA?

❖ Our vision was to create a sustainable service excellence culture in Singapore that would be led by EXSA winners. We need to continue to nurture and motivate staff towards even greater achievements in customer service, so that Singapore can continue to be recognised as a centre for positive experiences in the long term.



❖ Perspective from the Past

Ms Lau Chuen Wei was the EXSA Chairperson from 2006 to 2009. Today she is the Executive Director of the Singapore Business Advisors and Consultants Council.

❖ *Over the past 20 years, what role has EXSA played in promoting service excellence?*

The objectives of EXSA have not changed since the initiative was put in place 20 years ago. EXSA was developed not only to recognise excellent service but also to motivate staff to do even better. Twenty years ago, before technology sped things up for us, people were more engaged with one another and many of the service staff at hotels, stores or banks knew their customers by name. In our relentless drive towards achieving more in a shorter time, we seem to have lost some of the heart and soul that goes into delivering great service.

EXSA reminds us of the importance of bringing the human touch to everything we do and treating people in a gracious manner. While technology has brought with it many benefits and is here to stay, EXSA encourages us to use these advances as tools to take better care of our customers, rather than relying on them to do the job for us.

❖ *How can customers improve service standards in Singapore?*

The old saying goes that happiness shared is happiness doubled. For employees to feel truly appreciated and content with their work, we need to encourage customers to express a little more appreciation. Think about the taxi driver who takes you home from work every day, or the employee who delivers room service to your hotel room at one in the morning. These people work late nights, weekends and public holidays to make our lives a little easier. The least we can do is give back to them by showing our gratitude and thanks.



❖ Presidents' Messages

We spoke to some of the heads of the industry bodies that manage EXSA about what the programme means to them. Here's what they told us:



Mr Kevin Cheong, President, Association of Singapore Attractions

Service cannot be mechanical; it must be timely, spontaneous, thoughtful and genuine. Through the EXSA recognition structure, the industry is able to activate and motivate our staff to be more proactive and service-oriented. Our service professionals are vigilant and agile, and have a desire to please.

From a cultural perspective, employees need to think, plan and develop service standards that are truly Singaporean. Visitors come here for a truly unique experience. Therefore we must be delivering a service that is truly and authentically exclusive to Singapore. The flamboyant American type of service, for example, is not for us, and nor is the Thai style of hospitality. Sustainable tourism is about preserving the local culture, heritage, traditions, lifestyle and culture of the land, manifested through service and hospitality.



Mr Pang Kin Keong, Chairman of the Quality Service Committee, Public Sector

Service is one of the key values of the Public Sector. We must always place Singapore and Singaporeans at the heart of what we do, and service excellence is a core manifestation of this belief, and indeed enables us to achieve better outcomes for the nation. As such, the Public Sector is happy to have participated in the Excellent Service Awards these past 20 years, and looks forward to our continued participation. The Awards are an important way for us to recognise public officers who have provided exemplary service to citizens, and we hope also that they will inspire others to do likewise.



Mr Andrew Tjioe, President, Restaurant Association of Singapore

The service industry is a demanding yet rewarding sector to work in. Initiatives such as EXSA identify service champions and encourage them to do even better. EXSA spans all industries and is recognised nationwide. It also inspires others to work hard towards achieving that distinction. We hope to see even more food and beverage companies coming forward to nominate and recognise their staff for this award in the years ahead.



Madam Kay Kuok, President, Singapore Hotel Association

Mindful of the fact that customers want a holistic experience, EXSA was started in 1994 by the Restaurant Association of Singapore, Singapore Hotel Association and Singapore Retailers Association, together with the support of SPRING Singapore. The aim was to recognise our service role models nationally for their superb job in raising service standards in Singapore. As a mass award, EXSA recognises the efforts of all those who are part of the value chain in delivering excellent service. In the hotel industry, this plays a crucial role in motivating our service professionals to go the extra mile for our guests. My wish is for more and more service ambassadors to be inspired by EXSA and to collectively take the movement to the next level.



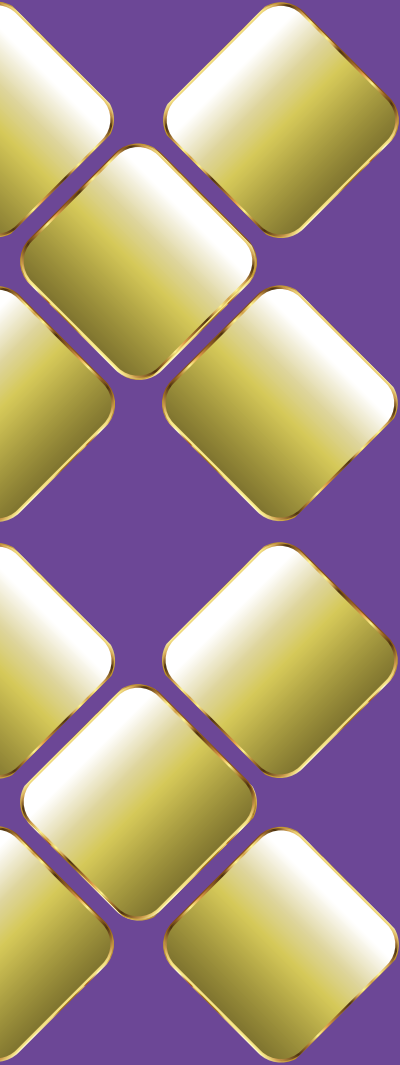
Dató Dr Jannie Chan, President, Singapore Retailers Association

Great customer service is about creating positive moments of truth to delight and excite customers and exceed their expectations. It is also about taking baby steps to build binding long-term relationships with our customers. Achieving service excellence is a never-ending journey, where our retail service professionals tirelessly surpass our own benchmarks and scale new heights to meet the ever-rising service expectations of today's sophisticated customers. EXSA is the epitome of service excellence achievement for the individual retail professional, and it serves to spur each and every one of them on to provide top quality service delivery standards to our customers.



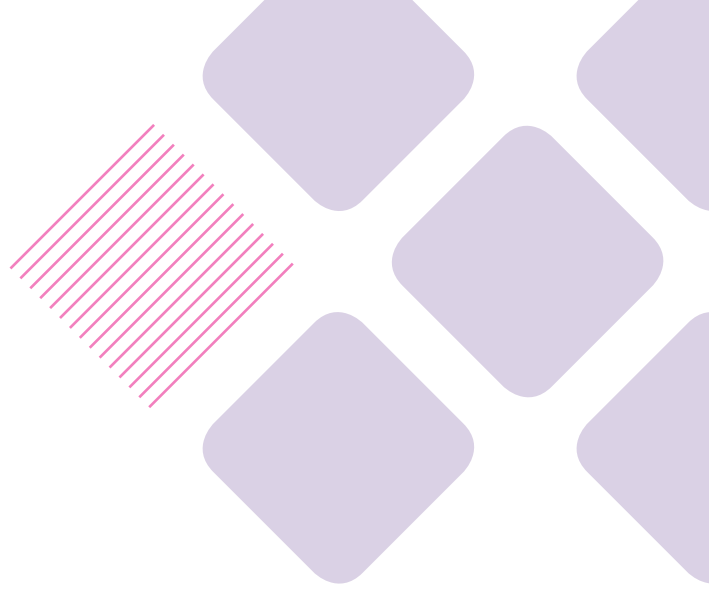
Mr Samuel Tsien, Chairman, The Association of Banks in Singapore

Banking, ultimately, is about people serving people. To build and sustain lasting relationships with customers, it is critical that their needs take precedence above all else. Among other things, this means exercising duty of care to ensure products and services are relevant, simplicity in communications and a continuous emphasis on maximising the customer experience. EXSA demonstrates a clear commitment by the ABS to raising service standards in the banking industry in Singapore. We are in one of the most competitive industries globally. Developing a deep and embedded culture of service is an imperative, not an option, if we want to stay ahead. EXSA is an ideal platform to reinforce the service commitment because it confers national recognition for individuals who are exemplary in the delivery of service. Bank officers who go the extra mile for their customers are recognised as beacons of service excellence and held up as role models for their peers.



EXSA Today : Growing Movement
A Company Perspective

EXSA TODAY



❖ EXSA Today : Growing Movement

At the inaugural EXSA ceremony in 1995, close to 400 employees were nominated for an award. Almost half of those winners were from the hotel industry – surely a testament to the commitment of hotel employees to strive towards exceptional service. Since then, however, EXSA has transformed into a mass award, with more than 17,000 individuals from a wide range of sectors recognised by the end of last year. EXSA today is a growing movement, creating service excellence by identifying a mass of deserving winners each year.

The year 1996 saw the creation of a new award – the Company Award. This was the brainchild of the National Productivity Board (which later became part of SPRING Singapore), who wished to recognise the role organisations play in motivating their workers, and the importance of highlighting organisations with a strong commitment to reinforcing positive customer exchanges.

❖ A Company Perspective

We spoke to the heads of a range of leading Singapore companies, to find out how EXSA has benefitted their staff and customers and contributed to the productivity of their businesses.

Mr Andrew Khoo, Director of Business Development and Operations, ABR Holdings Ltd



For more than 20 years, EXSA has set the industry standard for service excellence. It plays an influential role in encouraging service champions such as Jaya—our Assistant Manager at Swensen’s in Tampines Mall and an EXSA Gold Award recipient annually since 2012. Jaya serves as the role model for all of our service crew. He often goes the extra mile to deliver superior service. For example, at a recent birthday celebration for a large party, Jaya personally ensured everything was set up to meet the customers’ expectations, even though our policy is not to take reservations. He often pays attention to the smallest details and when he was seconded to another outlet, it was apparent that he helped improve the customer service standard during his brief stint there! By recognising and rewarding the efforts of service staff like Jaya, EXSA influences other service providers to improve service standards.

Singapore still falls behind some other countries in terms of its service culture. This means EXSA has an even greater role to play in the future to ensure that we remain highly competitive in this area. Going forward, with customers becoming ever more tech savvy and demanding, an initiative like EXSA makes it easier to set an industry benchmark and to raise the bar higher, year on year. We can leverage technology and social media to make EXSA more prominent, proactive and responsive – using apps and smartphones, for example – to keep track of deserving EXSA winners and promote what they do.

Mr Sam Davies was the Area General Manager of the InterContinental Hotels Group and General Manager of Holiday Inn Singapore Atrium. Today he is the Area General Manager and General Manager of Crowne Plaza Bangkok Lumpini Park



Our ambition at InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) is to be the number one hotel company in the world and to do that we need to put our guests and colleagues first. For our colleagues, this means encouraging them to achieve the Silver, Gold or Star awards for customer service excellence and to continue to improve each year. There’s a huge amount of pride in getting to wear an EXSA pin, and being recognised in this way in front of their peers is a fantastic motivation for our team.

The EXSA Development Workshop not only motivates nominees to get involved in external training, but it also provides an excellent platform for nominees to learn from their peers across the industry. It sharpens the team’s service skills as they interact and role-play and share others’ experiences that they can then take back to their own job within the hotel.

Going forward, EXSA will need to continue to be dynamic and nimble to stay relevant in this fast-changing industry. Now more than ever in the hospitality industry, the team needs to be very savvy with how we interact with our guests before, during and after their stay with us, both personally and electronically.

Mr Yeo Khee Leng, CEO, NTUC Club

Since 2004, NTUC Club has been a part of EXSA to recognise the excellent efforts of our service staff. Service Excellence is very important to us, it is in fact one of our four Core Values, the others being Care, Passion and Trust. NTUC Club's EXSA winners are increasing in number every year, and the initiative has spurred us on to have our own internal rewards for service excellence.



We launched the STARS awards last year to reward and recognise our staff for their good service. STARS stands for 'Safety, be There for your guests, Anticipation, Reliability and putting on a good Show'. Our awards and training courses motivate our staff to deliver better services. These training courses touch on issues such as the safety of our guests, having a positive attitude and body language, understanding our guests' needs and being willing to go the extra mile. In 2014, EXSA also inspired us to come up with our own unique Service Ambassadors Scheme (SAS). SAS ambassadors are selected based on their exemplary qualities in driving service initiatives, and the majority of them are past EXSA winners.

As part of NTUC Club's Downtown East Refresh project, we have included a brand promise to deliver excellent service to all our guests and customers. Service excellence is never a stand-alone; as we upgrade our 'hardware' in terms of newer and better facilities, we also upgrade our 'heartware' in terms of providing better services. We are confident that EXSA can continue to support service innovations in order to maintain service excellence in Singapore, and thus raise the level of prestige and professionalism of the service and hospitality sectors.



Ms Janice Ang, Head of Customer Advocacy and Service Quality, United Overseas Bank Group

The banking business is based on strong customer relationships and being able to provide excellent customer service is a big part of this. UOB's commitment to putting its customers at the centre of all it does is the reason behind the bank's consistent performance at EXSA and the growing satisfaction levels among our customers. We take our role in raising customer service standards in Singapore very seriously. To this end, UOB continues to invest in our people and capabilities.

EXSA is a source of great motivation for our employees as they are recognised at a national level for their good work. The awards also showcase service models for employees to emulate. Award winners become service champions within the bank and take on the important responsibility of sharing best practices with their colleagues.

Since EXSA was launched in the banking industry in 2007, we have seen the number of UOB EXSA winners grow steadily from 154, when it was first introduced, to 947 in 2014. We have also garnered the most number of Star Awards among participating banks for four consecutive years.

Mr Lee Meng Tat, CEO, Wildlife Reserves Singapore

Wildlife Reserves Singapore aims to inspire people to appreciate nature through exciting and meaningful wildlife experiences when they visit our wildlife parks – including the Jurong Bird Park, Night Safari, River Safari and Singapore Zoo. In creating a memorable wildlife experience, it is vital for us to deliver consistently good service and exceed our guests' expectations. Our staff members are trained, equipped and committed to service excellence. EXSA is a great motivator – the award gives a nod of approval to our staff members, and inspires and encourages them to do even better. Equally important is the time and effort put in by EXSA to help develop the service excellence skillsets of our colleagues, and reinforce the need to sustain a consistently high level of service after receiving the awards.



Mrs Helen Khoo, Executive Director, Wing Tai Retail Pte Ltd



EXSA goes beyond recognising staff who are dedicated and committed to service excellence. It also seeks to identify and develop service champions for staff to emulate, which in turn helps improve customers' shopping experiences. From an industry perspective, EXSA inspires organisations to share and learn from each other about how their staff can improve service standards in Singapore, and how companies can build a culture of service excellence.

One of the qualifying criteria for EXSA nominees is that they have to receive a certain number of shoppers' compliments. As such, service staff are encouraged to be proactive in asking shoppers to share feedback about their experiences. Such feedback allows us to assess our service standards, monitor and understand changing customer needs and implement appropriate training programs to help improve service excellence.

Wing Tai Retail's philosophy, 'Inspiring People, Delighting Customers', places staff at the organisation's core. Hence, training and development for improved learning is an essential aspect that can help enhance staff capabilities in delivering service excellence. EXSA further motivates service staff to deliver exceptional experiences that resonate with our customers and encourage them to return to our stores.

WINNERS

A Powerful Impact: Winners' Testimonies

Sector : Attractions

Sector : Land Transport

Sector : Public Service

Sector : Restaurant

Sector : Hospitality (Hotel)

Sector : Hospitality (Non-Hotel)

Sector : Retail

Sector : Banking



❖ A Powerful Impact: Winners' Testimonies

EXSA has had a powerful impact on our service industry. It's not only helped create a pool of top-quality service professionals who are equipped and trained to meet the high expectations of today's sophisticated and savvy customers, but it's also enhanced Singapore's excellent reputation for world-class service. All this is a reflection of our dedicated and conscientious service staff who work tirelessly to create remarkable and consistent customer experiences.

Since 1994, a large volume of deserving winners from all walks of life have been selected for EXSA's awards. Each year, these winners receive a certificate and a pin, which they wear with pride as a symbol of their commitment to providing great customer service time after time.

Sector: Attractions

EXSA spurred me on to excel



Ms Lily Samuel, Senior Manager, Education and Programmes, Singapore Philatelic Museum

I won the SuperStar Award in 2005 while serving as Assistant Manager for Education and Public Programmes. It was the first time I had won the award and it changed my perception of my job. It reinforced the importance of service excellence as well as the responsibility of a service champion. It spurred me on to excel in my work and since winning the award I have been promoted twice.

I believe that every customer is important. Being genuine and respectful is extremely vital in the service industry. When challenges arise, I listen carefully to the customer's needs and empathise with them so that I can find the best solution. Knowing my products, programmes and services is also imperative in ensuring that my customer's expectations are met.

I'm a first-time winner

Mr Jason Choo, Assistant Manager, Marketing, Singapore Science Centre

I received the Star Award and was a finalist for the SuperStar Award in 2010 as a Senior Officer with the Singapore Science Centre. Knowing that my manager recognised my efforts and nominated me for the award motivated me to work even harder to top the expectations of my corporate clients.



I plan corporate events for the Science Centre and understand that minor details matter when running major events. Logistics and operations need to be carefully planned to ensure events run smoothly for our corporate clients and attendees. I have helped the centre organise events for World Blood Donor Day, and PCF Family Day for 5,000 preschoolers and their family members. Through new ticketing, admission control and car park management, I helped to improve the customer experience at these events.

Customer service starts with empathy. I work hard to devote attention to my customers and make them feel heard, understood, appreciated and respected. I would encourage others to do the same and always remember that behind every customer is a person.

Sector : Land Transport

Pay it forward



**Mr Jason Soo Thiam Chye, Station Manager,
SMRT Trains**

For me, customer service is about paying it forward. Doing something nice for someone else is not difficult, and it can spark generosity and kindness around us. I am extremely proud that my efforts to help those around me have been recognised once again. I believe what comes around goes around, and assisting others brings joy to my life.

This year I picked up the Star Award as the Station Manager at MacPherson MRT Station. I am always here to help my customers, whether they are caught in the rain, need assistance getting on the train or have questions about train delays. When roadworks blocked one of the exit points at the station, I put in place the necessary signage to help train passengers navigate their way onto the street. I'm always looking for opportunities to improve the customer experience to make their journey comfortable and easy.

In previous years I have also won two Gold and two Star awards. I've been fortunate to meet a lot of different service staff from various industries at the Development Workshop. Every year I learn something new that I can practise in my job.

Treat your customers as you'd like to be treated

**Ms Rosenani Binte Salleh, Assistant Station Manager,
SMRT Trains**

This year, I won the Star Award as the Assistant Station Manager for the Yishun station. It is the fourth year in a row I have been an EXSA winner – nominated for a Gold Award in 2011, Silver in 2012 and Gold again in 2013. This recognition is extremely meaningful to me because I haven't won any other awards in my 20-year career.

I enjoy my job and do everything I can to provide comfort to my customers. One Friday I worked a 20-hour shift when one of our rail lines was forced to close. I was called to the platform to manage the large and disgruntled crowd that had to wait long periods between train arrivals. I remained upbeat and answered as many questions as I could. An internal customer complimented me for my high energy, even at the end of the long shift.

Before I joined SMRT Trains six years ago I worked as a nurse. It's been a big career change, but what my current colleagues and managers have told me is that I really care for each individual customer, just as I did with my former patients. How I treat others is a direct reflection of how I want to be treated – if I am good to others, they will be good to me. This, to me, is the essence of great customer service.



Sector : Public Service

My Job is an extension of me



Mr Vikneswaran s/o Krishnan Murthi, Allied Educator (Learning and Behavioral Support) Anglo-Chinese School (Barker Road)

I was awarded the Star Award in 2012 for my efforts in supporting students with special needs. The award has made me more passionate about wanting to do better for my students. I not only work towards my students' inclusion in the school system but also facilitate greater success in their academic pursuits, which stem beyond their secondary school years.

My job is both challenging and rewarding. I recently accompanied students on an overseas school trip, including a student with autism. The nature of autism creates anxiety in these individuals whenever they are exposed to an environment that they are not familiar with. The trip required a lot of forward thinking from my end and understanding of the student's needs. I made him feel comfortable and well-adjusted throughout the trip so that he eventually excelled in all the activities we had planned. It was an extremely positive experience.

All of my students are important to me and I take care in listening and relating to them. Doing one's job effectively, is not only based on completing the roles and responsibilities assigned to that position. It is also about having passion and seeing your job as an extension of you.

What a surprise

Captain Nigel Jevan Mathiaz, Intelligence Officer, Ministry of Defence

In 2013, I won the Star Award for establishing the Parent Engagement Programme at the Basic Military Training Centre. As part of the programme, I sent weekly updates of stories, photos and videos to the families of the soldiers under my command so as to keep parents informed of their sons' development and training. I was surprised to have won an EXSA as I didn't think my actions were that big of a deal. It was a great morale booster and reminder to always appreciate people's work, no matter how small.



At the EXSA Development Workshop that I attended I learnt the value of patience and understanding. This is particularly important in my job because you can't just bark orders at people. Instead, you need to treat people with respect.

Sector : Restaurant

EXSA played a role in my promotion



Mr Mohammed Saiful Bin Kassim, Customer Relations Manager, McDonald's

I was with McDonald's as a Store Activities Representative when I received the EXSA Gold Award in 2005. I also won a Star Award in 2006, 2007, 2009 and 2014 and am one of the SuperStar winners this year.

I found the Development Workshop that we attended as winners very interactive and insightful. What I enjoyed most was that we were given the chance to work in groups and interact with others who came with their experiences from different companies. We were also able to use our work experience to brainstorm solutions in different service scenarios. Sharing experiences with my peers was also very useful. It allowed me to understand and learn many different service approaches, which I can apply to my working life. It also gave me better ideas on how to create and use innovative ways to improve our service standards or go the extra mile.

Winning these awards has enabled me to see service excellence from different perspectives. I think that winning may have played a role in my promotion, too – I'm now a Customer Relations Manager at McDonald's. I'm passionate about service excellence and feel privileged and humbled to have received these awards. It has definitely motivated me to do even better each day and encouraged me to think out of the box to provide quality service to my customers in different ways. I also hope to share my service success stories with my colleagues at work and inspire them to be service champions, too.

I'm a SuperStar finalist

Mr Ting Chia Siang Amos, Outlet Manager, OverEasy Bar and Diner, The Lo & Behold Group

I was the Senior Assistant Manager with The Lo & Behold Group when I received the EXSA Silver Award in 2012. The next year, I was promoted to Outlet Manager and I guess the award might have, in one way or another, strengthened the proposal for my promotion.

As an award winner, I attended a Development Workshop, which I found extremely useful. The sessions gave me an insight into how other F&B establishments work and deal with challenges. We were able to learn about best practices from other established restaurants, an opportunity which might not otherwise have come my way.

This year, I received a Star Award and I'm also a SuperStar winner. Being the recipient of an EXSA feels like a huge bonus and motivates me further to provide even better service to my guests.



Sector : Hospitality (Hotel)

I turn moments into memories



Ms Elaine Seng Fun Kim, Assistant Outlet Manager, Fairmont Singapore and Swissôtel The Stamford

I have been the lucky recipient of six awards since 2004, including receiving the Star Award three times. These awards have given me greater confidence when interacting with our guests and turning moments into memories.

Delivering excellent service need not be a result of doing something complicated. It is doing the right thing at the right time to meet customers' needs and making it a memorable experience for them. At Mikuni, Fairmont Singapore, we have several regular guests who have dined at the restaurant for many years. One of them is Dr Poon, who has been bringing his wife to the restaurant for eight years to celebrate their wedding anniversary. He usually brings flowers for his wife, but one year he didn't have time to collect a bouquet before dinner. While they were enjoying dessert, I surprised Dr Poon and his wife by presenting her with a bunch of flowers. He was touched by the extra mile that I took to ensure that his tradition wasn't broken.

I think the most important aspect about customer service is to be sincere and serve from your heart. We need to understand what guests are looking for and put ourselves in their shoes. It is also important to be patient, to listen attentively to your guests before offering alternatives. When the guest knows that we are trying our best to understand them and meet their needs, they will be happier to accept the choices we propose. The rule of thumb is to ensure all customers leave the outlet satisfied and happy.

I'm thrilled to have won more than once

Ms Tan Mui Kheng Jessie, Service Associate - F&B (Waitress), Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore

I have been working in various customer service roles at Shangri-La Hotel for 36 years. I haven't counted, but I must have received eight or nine awards since EXSA started. This year, as part of the in-room dining service team, I was honoured to win the Star Award again. EXSA continues to motivate me to do a great job, and I would be thrilled to be able to win an award every year.



I love my job. The best part about it is when I see the same guests returning to our hotel. It proves they enjoyed their experience during their previous visit and that means I'm doing my job well. I greet all guests with a smile and go the extra mile to make our repeat guests feel happy, comfortable and relaxed. Some of them even know my name.

I live to serve and I want to encourage my peers to do the same. The EXSA Development Workshop taught me to share my experiences with my colleagues so that we can deliver the best possible service to our guests. Every day is a learning experience, and it's important that we work as a team to give our guests a truly memorable Shangri-La Experience during their entire stay.

Sector : Hospitality (Non-Hotel)

Service etiquette is important



Mr Mohamed Kaiash Bin Mohamed, Senior Operations Officer, Singapore Cruise Centre

As an EXSA Star recipient, it is important that I share my experience and best practices with my colleagues. I have been invited to be a guest speaker during service orientation and service refresher courses. I am happy to be able to share and continually remind my peers about my best practices and service etiquette.

As a team lead, I work hand in hand with the terminal managers to create a pleasant and memorable experience for our passengers, and ensure smooth passenger traffic and baggage operations. I go all the way to help my customers. Citing an incident, I had a passenger who arrived at the ferry and realised she left her luggage in the taxi. I assisted her without hesitation and with the utmost patience. Together, we promptly located the driver and her luggage and she boarded the ferry without any disruption to her trip.

My advice to other service professionals is to always stay alert and think on your feet in order to continually contribute to overall service improvements. By providing inputs and suggestions on improvement to service operations and productivity, you will successfully lift the customer experience.

I treat guests as my friends

Ms Norma Idris, Senior Housekeeper, Treetops Executive Residences

In 2006, I won my eighth EXSA as the Housekeeper at Treetops Executive Residences. It's always an exciting moment finding out that you have been nominated again. It gives me a great sense of pride and responsibility towards my work and I hope that it motivates the rest of the team to do better.

I am dedicated to helping our customers with their every need. For instance, when one of our guests injured her right hand, I came to her room every morning to help her make a cup of coffee. And when another guest had a craving for sweets, I made her homemade tarts.

In 2011, I was promoted to Senior Housekeeper and I believe EXSA had a role to play in my promotion. I believe in being completely genuine with my customers and I treat all of our guests the same way that I treat my friends and family.



Sector : Retail

First impressions count



Ms Sivajothi Elangovan, Customer Service Executive, City Square Mall

I have been working at the customer service counter at City Square Mall for three years. In 2013, I won the EXSA SuperStar Award for my dedication to excellent service. I also received a Silver Award in 2012.

When it comes to the service industry, first impressions count and EXSA encourages service staff to deliver better outcomes to satisfy their customers. I deal with various challenges every day, and I always do my best to help our customers with their problems. For example, a tourist recently approached me to purchase tickets to the Singapore Grand Prix. He was only in Singapore for two days and desperately wanted to see the race, but he had forgotten to bring his passport, which was necessary for payment. His hotel wouldn't give me his passport details over the phone, so I contacted SISTIC to explain the situation. They made an exception and I was able to print tickets for the customer and send them straight to the racetrack.

I found the EXSA Development Workshop extremely useful because I was able to hear from service staff in other industries. We shared our experiences with one another and I learnt new ways to solve difficult customer service problems. I'm extremely proud to have been recognised for my efforts and I continue to focus on improving myself every year.

My customers are my friends

Ms Jenny Quak, Retail Assistant, NTUC FairPrice

I have been an EXSA winner for the past six years in a row, and in 2011, I was lucky enough to take home the SuperStar Award. I was proud to be recognised for my hard work because I have always believed that good service is an integral part of my job. My customers are my friends – not only do I help them with their questions but I also share my recipes with them, which always makes them smile.

EXSA has helped me understand how to build better rapport with my customers. At the Development Workshop that I attended as an award winner, I learnt how to read body language to understand my customers' needs. This is particularly useful when dealing with angry customers because it helps me to handle the situation in a calm and professional manner. I focus all my attention on the customer and satisfying their requests.

I believe we can do a better job to serve our customers by working together as a team. I want to see our customers smiling from the moment they walk into the store, until after they leave. I encourage my peers to come to work with a happy disposition and focus on great service across every part of the business.



Sector: Banking

EXSA gives me a sense of satisfaction



Ms Chua Ai Ling Irene, Senior Customer Relations Manager, DBS Bank

Winning the ABS Service Excellence Champion Award* 2014 was an amazing experience. I serve all my customers with respect and try to see things from their perspective. I interact with them as I would with my family members, with warmth and sincerity. I would like my customers to experience the 'heart' in banking and reverse the perception that banking is all about 'cold hard cash'.

I receive this prestigious award with pride and a deep sense of satisfaction that serving from the heart is truly the way up to the top. It spurs me on to set new benchmarks of service within my team, organisation and ultimately the banking industry.

The banking industry has commenced its journey into the world of service evolution with the inception of EXSA; I am committed to be an active catalyst in this evolving journey towards service excellence.

*The ABS Service Excellence Champion Award is the equivalent of the Superstar Award

Customer service should be part of your DNA

Ms Agnes Yo, Assistant Vice President, Group Operations and Technology, OCBC Bank

In the past five years, I have won three awards - the Silver Award in 2011, the Gold Award in 2013 and the Star Award in 2014. Winning these awards has motivated me to excel not only as a staff member but also as a team leader, and to be a role model for my colleagues to emulate.

As a team leader in the Consumer Loan Operations group I went the extra mile to help staff navigate their way through the new Total Debt Servicing Ratio Framework that the bank implemented. I organised regular workshops and provided guidance to all staff, to help them communicate the changes in a clear and succinct manner to their customers.

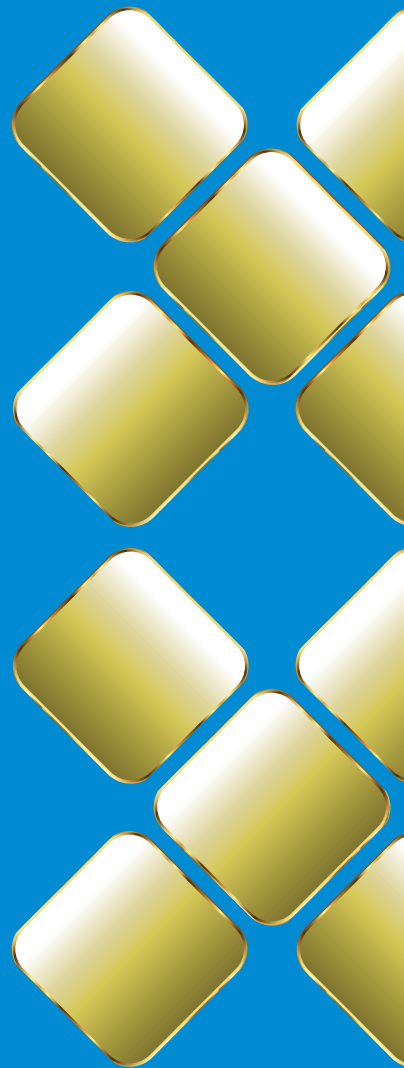
Delivering quality customer service must come from the heart. It needs to be part of your DNA and not something that you impose on yourself. That way, your customers will feel your sincerity and will stay loyal. Through the EXSA experience, I have learnt a lot from people in other industries about the different ways they improve the customer experience and motivate their staff to strive towards service excellence.



FUTURE

Fit For The Future

20 years and beyond



Fit for the future



EXSA has grown from strength to strength over the past 20 years. What started as a basic awards programme to recognise quality service has grown into a mass movement that is helping to lift the reputation of Singapore's world-class workforce. However, as organisations try to navigate increasingly competitive markets and keep pace with advances in technology, our service professionals will need to up the ante in service delivery to attract and retain customers.

We asked the Chairperson of the EXSA Committee, Ms Margaret Heng, how staff in the service industry could elevate their performance to serve customers better.

Elevating customer service

Great service boils down to understanding the customer. Who are they, where do they come from, what do they want? As we all know, customers are most likely to remember the direct interactions they have with your organisation. That's why making personal connections with your customers by anticipating their needs will help you exceed their expectations.

In addition to recognising service champions for their superb efforts, EXSA has a Development Workshop which encourages the sharing of best practices on service delivery within the industry. The workshop therefore serves as a platform for continual learning on how best we can create exceptional experiences for our customers.

Being in the service sector, the personal touch is always an important factor. Hence, as organisations upgrade their equipment and work processes become automated, it is vital for service staff to learn to integrate technology into their interactions with customers. Technology should not replace customer service - rather, it should enhance it. Being available to answer questions or help your customers use new technology will certainly leave them delighted.

EXSA therefore motivates individuals to think outside of the box and come up with new ways to enhance the customer service experience. By making suggestions that contribute to overall service improvements, you will make it easier for your customers to use your products and entice them to come back for more. Innovative operations will also leave a lasting impression on your customers and help you differentiate yourself from your competitors.

Our service professionals have come a long way in the last 20 years, but there is still room for improvement. Cooperation is necessary from all staff to help raise the bar of the Singapore service industry to new heights. In the years to come, EXSA will continue to play an important role in lifting customer service standards. My hope for the future is to see everyone in the service sector wearing the EXSA pin, as a symbol of their dedication and commitment to excellent service.

Ms Margaret Heng
*Chairperson, EXSA Committee &
Executive Director
Singapore Hotel Association*

❖ 20 years and beyond

We asked some of the Executive Directors from the industry bodies that manage EXSA how they thought service standards would change in the future. Here's what they had to say:



Ms Tresnawati Pihadi, Chairperson for Training and Manpower Development, Association of Singapore Attractions

Singapore has a large number of attractions such as Night Safari, Sentosa, The Flyer and wonderful museums for both locals and tourists. Good set-ups, rides and exhibits must be complemented by well-trained and capable service staff to create 'wow' moments and memorable experiences for our customers, who these days are increasingly well-travelled and more sophisticated. Good 'hardware' coupled with excellent 'heartware' will go a long way in maintaining the high standards needed in the service industry.

Mrs Ong-Ang Ai Boon, Director, The Association of Banks in Singapore

Well-known American entrepreneur J.C. Penney once said: "A merchant who approaches business with the idea of serving the public well has nothing to fear from the competition." Indeed keeping the customer happy is the axiom of every successful business and the banking and financial sector is no exception. In today's highly competitive environment, the customer service experience is a key differentiator for providers of banking and financial services, and is critical for customer acquisition and loyalty. By recognising service quality at the national level, EXSA provides a platform for ABS member banks and other participating financial institutions to commend officers who go above and beyond the call of duty to attend to customers' needs.



Although service standards are on the rise, there is always room for further improvements. Fundamentally, staff in the banking and financial services sector need to move away from the false dichotomy in the 'sales staff' and 'service staff' mindset. All staff are service staff and their principle role is to SERVE. They should remember that sales is an outcome of a good customer experience which is in turn dependent on good service behaviour. Financial products can befuddle many retail customers and spending the extra time to educate them on what they are buying will help reap rewards in the longer run, both for the staff and the industry.

Ms Lim Rui Shan, Executive Director, Restaurant Association of Singapore

With increasing numbers of food and beverage companies adopting technology in areas such as order placement or even food serving, service standards are shifting. In the future, there'll be more emphasis on interactions with customers, service recoveries and customer retention. Providing excellent service through this time of transformation will not be difficult, as long as you have a passion for the industry and deliver service with sincerity.

**Mr Anthony Gan, Executive Director, Singapore Retailers Association**

We have seen service standards improve over the years, and market forces will continue to raise the bar. With the influx of tourism and the ongoing increase in the number of shopping malls on the local scene, not to mention exciting ventures like the trial pedestrianisation of Orchard Road, retail is set to flourish even further.

In addition, the popularity of social media has created unprecedented opportunities for customer relationships, which could make or break a brand within a short period of time. The retail service professionals of today are operating in a whole new arena. They need to be well networked to understand what they want from their brands and quick to adjust in order to exceed customers' expectations.

